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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 002810

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AF FOR DAS YAMAMOTO

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: UNMEE SAYS ACTION NECESSARY TO PREVENT
"IRREVERSIBLE" ERITREAN OCCUPATION OF TSZ

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2739

Classified By: CHARGE VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) Summary. The United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) Deputy Special Representative Ambassador Azouz Ennifar invited representatives of the United Nations Security Council permanent members to a briefing October 17 to discuss Eritrea's movement into the temporary security zone (TSZ). Ennifar reiterated the UN Secretary General's call for the Eritrean government to withdraw its troops from TSZ immediately and to cooperate with the UN in restoring the

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ceasefire agreement. He reported that the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) had move approximately 1,500 troops and 14 tanks into the TSZ, but as of 1000 hrs (0300 hrs Washington) no further movements had been detected. Ennifar said that the Eritreans movement into the TSZ was likely a move to reestablish sovereignty over its "occupied" territory. He feared that if the international community did not react with a "serious response" to the incursion, Eritrea's presence in the TSZ would likely be reinforced and ultimately irreversible. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Ambassadors and representatives from the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Russia, and Norway met October 17 with Deputy Special Representative Ambassador Azouz Ennifar and UNMEE Deputy Force Commander via teleconference. Ambassador's special assistant was notetaker.

ERITREAN MOVEMENTS REPORTED BY UNMEE

13. (C) Ambassador Ennifar reported that shortly before 0800 hrs October 16, Eritrean militia notified UNMEE personnel at a checkpoint in Sector West that it has declared an emergency situation and ordered them to return to their barracks. Ennifar explained that UNMEE "law and order" regulations stipulate that UNMEE personnel must comply with militia instructions during a declared emergency situation. After the takeover of the checkpoint, Ennifar noted, two incursions by the Eritrean military into Sector West of the TSZ: one movement initiated at 0800 hrs October 16 from Karakesh towards Shambiko and the other initiated at 0830 hrs October 16 from Maluba towards Om Hajer .

14. (C) Ennifar reported that 0800 movement towards Shambiko consisted five tanks, one possible air defense artillery, a bulldozer, two jeep vehicles carrying an unspecified number of EDF soldiers, and 400-500 EDF soldiers armed with AK47

rifles on foot. He said the 0830 movement towards Om Hajer consisted of an armed army battalion (approximately 1000 soldiers) on foot, 10 tanks, RPGs, BKM machine guns and one rocket launcher. Ennifar noted that as of 1000 hrs (0300 hrs Washington) October 17 no further movements had been detected.

¶15. (C) Ennifar said Eritrea has imposed restrictions on its activities in Sector West and UNMEE's current monitoring capability in the area is severely limited.

POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS

¶16. (C) Ennifar stated that these two military movements from the Eritrean government is the first of its kind since the Algiers Agreement and establishment of the TSZ. He posited that there were two possible motivations for such action. Ennifar explained that the traditional harvesting season may have triggered such a movement but rhetorically asked why tanks were necessary to harvest crops. According to Ennifar, a second, more likely, motivation for the incursion in the TSZ was Eritrean's desire to reestablish sovereignty over its

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"occupied" territory and collapse the security zone altogether. Ennifar said that the Government of Eritrea views UNMEE as an instrument of the Government of Ethiopia to occupy its territory by proxy.

¶17. (C) When asked by Charge if Eritrea's military movements along the border might be a provocation, Ennifar said that while these actions were clearly meant to be "seen" as they occurred in broad daylight, it was unclear what the true motivations might be. The French Ambassador asked if these actions might be a mechanism to test the Ethiopian military. Ennifar responded by saying that Eritrea's actions would certainly have an impact on the entire region.

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UNMEE RECOMMENDATION

¶18. (C) Ennifar said that if the international community did not react with a "serious response" to the incursion, Eritrea's presence in the TSZ would likely be reinforced and ultimately irreversible. He suggested that the international community condemn Eritrea's actions and compel Eritrea to uphold the ceasefire agreement. Ennifar added that Eritrea's latest actions were an example of why the UNMEE mandate must be renewed and maintained at its current level. Ennifar said that UNMEE will continue to keep the border as well controlled as possible, but cautioned that without UNMEE, these events might have been "dramatic."

HUDDLESTON